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LETTER DATED 8 MAY 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BURUNDI TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the press release issued by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Burundi (see annex). In his statement, the Burundian Minister for Foreign Affairs draws attention to the fact that terrorist attackers have assassinated a member of Parliament and murdered other citizens, and that public buildings and private homes have been looted, damaged and destroyed.

As an official and categorical denial of the shameless accusations that have been made against the Burundian army, which certain circles have all too gratuitously and tendentiously blamed for the recent deaths in Cibitoke province, the Minister for Foreign Affairs states that, on the contrary, the forces of order have rescued many other citizens threatened by armed terrorist groups that have infiltrated into Burundi from abroad.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Térence NSANZE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

96-11840 (E) 080596 080596 090596

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ANNEX

Press release dated 5 May 1996

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation wishes to inform national and international public opinion that the armed rebellion intent on waging war against Burundi has once again perpetrated crimes against innocent civilians.

On Friday, 3 May 1996, at 0600 hours, rebels based in Zaire made an incursion into Cibitoke. The attack was repulsed by the forces of order. The attackers withdrew to the place from which they came. During this engagement, a number of civilians sought refuge at the home of the People's Representative, the Honourable Bibiane Ntamutumba. A second wave of attackers, from the same rebel base, attacked the residence of the Honourable Bibiane Ntamutumba, where his family and the people who had sought refuge were staying. The attackers set fire to the house and used grenades to kill everyone in it. The forces of order were able to save only two children.

At Bujumbura, on Saturday, 4 May 1996, at 0130 hours, the same death squads attacked King Khaled University Hospital, killing one person and wounding four others (a five-month-old baby, which was seriously hurt; two women; and a person wounded in the war). Moreover, the attackers blew up doors, broke windows, looted wards and stole equipment and medicine. They fired shots in all the wards and destroyed much equipment. The patients managed to survive by taking shelter under their beds, and thanks to the rapid intervention of the forces of order.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation presents its most heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation thanks the heads of the diplomatic missions and the representatives of international and non-governmental organizations that visited King Khaled University Hospital in order to observe what had taken place, extend their sympathy to the people of Burundi and express their outrage at these criminal acts, which were directed exclusively against defenceless people and the country's principal medical establishment.

The men and the organizations that sponsored this slaughter, these attempts on people's lives and this destruction had, one recalls, since 30 March 1996 - that is, immediately after the Regional Summit in Tunis - perpetrated other attacks in which children, women and old people were the principal victims, and in which hospitals, community clinics, health centres and ambulances were destroyed in the provinces of Bururi, Makamba, Gitega, Muyinga, Karusi, Rutana, Muramvya and Bubanza. At the time, these criminal acts did not elicit much sympathy from the international community. By what moral standards can such acts be understood, forgiven and accepted as commonplace?

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation requests the heads of diplomatic missions and the representatives of international and non-governmental organizations to report objectively about what they have seen

to the Governments, nations or organizations that they represent and give them an accurate account of what is taking place in Burundi: recognized crimes against innocent populations, women, children and defenceless patients cannot be mistaken for a struggle for democracy or the liberation of an ethnic group, or presented simply as inter-ethnic confrontation or fighting between the army and the rebels. These are crimes against humanity that the entire international community must denounce and condemn without hesitation, and combat without delay.